3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



attitudes toward French culture in all of its expressions, and by a new feeling of kinship for the peoples and cultures of Africa.

The variety of views expressed by Haitian intellectuals was colored by differences no more subtle than those characteristic of the intellectuals of any other country in the Caribbean region—even though North American observers unfortunately persist in treating such differences as politically irrelevant. There were those spokesmen who continued to embrace French culture and to reject "Africanism," only deploring the North American presence in Haiti. Others embodied their views in a staunchly Haitian nationalism and, as they began to view their country in a new light, invested the Haitian folk with an unrealistically romantic picturesqueness. Still others fastened upon the African theme with special intensity, and thereby gave a strong racist tinge to their nationalism.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, anthropology came to be seen as an important means for giving Haitians an accurate—that is, an "inside"—picture of their own society; a number of young ethnologists, mainly self-trained, began to publish works on Haitian culture. Soon anthropology was pressed into a political mold, anticipating similar developments in other "colonial" countries. The first novels purporting to deal with the common people, though sometimes tinged with idealized preconceptions of rural society, were published; and an impressive number of competent young poets devoted themselves to aesthetic explorations of the Haitian spirit. Haitian cultural and intellectual life, in short, was taken up with the rediscovery of Haiti and its people.

But the Estimé regime did not produce changes in the economic structure of Haitian society of importance proportionate to the national cultural renascence. Even those modifications in the class structure for which Estimé is sometimes given credit might not have occurred, were it not for educational reforms that had begun in the 1920s and the beneficial effects of Haiti's prosperity of the mid-1940s. What Estimé could do was to open the ranks of an inefficiently large bureaucracy to able, if sometimes inadequately trained, newcomers of poor rural antecedents.

At the same time, as the Comhaire-Sylvains have suggested (1959: 179–89), a qualitatively different class group was beginning to emerge in Port-au-Prince during Estimé's presidency, and the presence of such a group suggests that new economic forces were feebly stirring.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



were abolished; with such concessions the people must be satisfied. Dessalines tacitly confessed his inability to follow any course but the French colonial system, with modifications introduced by Toussaint.

Many of the blacks, having tasted a moment's freedom, were not inclined to give it up. Before the new order of Dessalines was firmly established, therefore, they ran away with their families into the hills, where they escaped official notice. As squatters they lived out their lives unmolested. By the time they were officially rediscovered, all Haiti had become a land of peasants.

At the other end of the ladder from the laborers were the officials, who might be great men or small clerks, members of the entourage of the governor-general or merely overseers of a plantation. In order to keep the vast agricultural economy functioning smoothly it was necessary to have hundreds of agents, directors, clerks, and overseers, each of whom must report to a superior. In this official class there was at least a possibility of realizing an ambition for oneself; there was a basis of comparison; more important, there was some possibility of attracting favorable attention of persons in high places and so of gaining promotion. Inevitably something of the colonial state of mind must have carried over into the new era, so that an ex-slave would consider himself as having risen in the world to be now performing a task which only white men used to do—to be spared field labor and to direct the work of others. Out of this group of petty agents rose a few men of ambition who were later to belong to the élite.

Higher officers of state were in a much more favorable position to achieve social eminence. Not only did they perform no manual labor; they were twice removed from that life, since they directed the men who directed the workers. They handled funds. They came into contact with Dessalines himself. Many former gens de couleur filled these important posts, for the number of Haitians who could read and write was woefully limited.

The army was the great power in the country, for the new state was a military one. Since fear of a return of the French required the maintenance of a large standing army,[4] Dessalines made a virtue of this apparent necessity, using his soldiers to enforce discipline among the cultivators. On whom else could he rely for his local administration?

4. Humboldt estimated that the army of Dessalines numbered 37,300, which would be one tenth of the total population. Other estimates run as low as 15,000. Even this figure would be about a tenth of the male population.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



their districts, principally during the working hours of the day. They were held responsible for all consequences of their own negligence.

This whole flow of legislation was designed primarily for the protection of the great landed proprietors, yet there were other laws which aided the masses. In former days workers had been coerced through corporal punishment. This was by law now abolished. Temporary assignments of garden plots were required for each family of laborers; medical care must be provided at the expense of the planter; the aged and infirm must be guaranteed the right to keep their homes and gardens even though no longer able to work. Expectant mothers in the fourth month of pregnancy must be relieved of field work, with no limitation of their right to share in the estate's income; mothers of nursing children must be permitted to remain at home until the weaning of their infants.

A great concession to the workers was made by abolishing the office of "inspector of cultures." In the days of Toussaint and Dessalines each district of the country had had its inspector, whose duty it was to see that crop cultivation proceeded according to schedule.[27] This man's disapproval of conditions resulted in fines and personal chastisement. By abolishing the office Pétion effected a great saving in salaries, for there had been thousands of these inspectors; on the other hand, the watchfulness of the inspectors had kept agricultural production at a high level. With no officials to dog the footsteps of the workers, crops immediately fell off.

Pétion clearly expected la grande culture to be the prevailing mode of agriculture in the republic. He fostered all kinds of legislation regulating it, even aside from that already mentioned. For example, a complete schedule was prepared for the division of income of the estate.[28] But the entire system was too neatly worked out and artificial to be effective, particularly since it was not backed up with force. The threat of punishment removed, most workers began gradually, often deliberately, to sabotage the system. It was much more pleasant

27. Christophe followed his predecessors in keeping the district inspectors.

28. This could be very complicated. A tenant farmer might hire workers, and so have to share his half of the income with them. In such cases, the division of the money crops was to be made in kind or in money, at current prices, in the presence of the local justice, his assessors, and an officer of the *gendarmerie*. The workers' "fourth" was divided into portions of which three went to the first foreman, two to each of the skilled workers, one and a half to each male or female worker, and one half to each child laborer between ten and fourteen years of age.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



175 423 up so many of these, there was no way short of a revolution to reconstitute the now parceled estates. Obviously the Code did not envisage the control of serfs by small property owners, yet there were more small owners than large.

175 184 466 In the third place, the Spanish-speaking masses of the eastern part of the island had never experienced the kind of forced labor with which most Haitians had been at one time or another familiar. Their noncoöperation made enforcement difficult.

175 647 Finally, the administration of so detailed a plan called for the establishment, at once and yet in complete order, of a fully trained corps of bureaucrats, perfectly coöperating with each other, most of them educated, and all incorruptibly honest. If every literate person in the state had been drafted for service, Boyer could not have filled all the offices required by the Code.

175 465 434 After brief and piecemeal experience with the law in operation, moreover, even the few remaining large landholders turned against it. While they approved the provisions for forced labor, they discovered that to turn over to the workers a quarter or half of the annual crop, in a falling world market, gave too slim a profit.[42] Without the support even of its original sponsors, failure of the law was inevitable.

175 648 652 These factors alone would have been enough to kill the Code; but its real death blow came from an entirely different quarter. The year before the agricultural laws were passed, Boyer had achieved what he considered to be a political master stroke. He had made a financial settlement with France whereby Haiti, in return for a large sum in cash and regular annual payments for sixty years thereafter, should receive full recognition of independence from France; also the former mother country would renounce all claims to any properties in the country. Boyer had felt that the chief debilitating influence on the political and economic life of his people was the constant dread that France might one day return to claim her lost colony. To rid the nation of that incubus, therefore, seemed to him a high feat of statesmanship, no matter what the financial cost.[43]

[433] [24] 42. Coffee, now the staple crop of Haiti, was meeting competition from the other coffee-producing countries of the world. To put the sugar manufactories into working condition again called for more money than was available.

[643] [648] 43. Boyer's hand was forced to a certain extent by France, which had been exerting diplomatic pressure upon Haiti; the President, however, seemed to regard the settlement as a distinct coup.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



unplanned, undesired
Haitian peasantry, to sum up, began as the result of two policies intended to achieve ends quite different; first, presidential gifts of land, the chief purpose of which had been to pay the soldiers of the republic; and second, the crop-sharing system adopted by landlords after the failure of Boyer's Code.

## 6. *The Drawing of Caste Lines (1820–1843)*

Almost every major presidential aim of Boyer came to grief. His tranquil quarter-century rule, the unified island, the financial surplus with which his presidency began, the peace with France after 1825—all these advantages combined with his good intentions did not save his projects from shipwreck. Near the beginning of his régime he announced that, like his revered predecessor Pétion, he felt the safety of Haiti to lie in the abolition of all color distinctions and prejudices. Just as his great Code Rural proved a complete failure, however, so did his efforts to do away with the color line. On the contrary, it was during Boyer's time that class distinctions became fixed, in large part although not wholly, on the basis of color.

Stating that the policy of his government was to put an end, as far as possible, to jealousies of caste, he consistently for a few years promoted a black every time a promotion had been given to a mulatto or other light-skinned person. This procedure soon met an insuperable obstacle. Government posts in general required literacy, and only a very small number of blacks were educated, so that the supply of Negroes was not sufficient to furnish him with candidates. Since one of the few roads to lucrative success lay in official positions, ambitious young colored men sought eagerly for government office, and Boyer soon had no alternative but to advance men of his own complexion. In the army, on the other hand, literacy was not necessary for promotion. Ambitious Negro youths, therefore, frequently chose this career which, while not very profitable in monetary rewards, at least gave a man a certain social status and economic security.

Because of the state of education in the republic, consequently, an ugly situation developed, with the civil arm of government almost wholly in control of the colored element and the military force dominated by blacks. Fortunately for the country no crisis developed during the 1820's and 1830's which made an open breach between army and state.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



Next to the agricultural system, the state of education in the republic probably had as much to do as anything with fixing the caste system upon Haiti. So long as the mass of people were not only black but illiterate as well, they would have no means of reaching a social status beyond the one in which they existed. Certainly the aspiring Negroes would not wish to enlighten them, for to stir up the whole people would destroy the very possibility of distinction. As W. S. Gilbert puts it, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Public education, consequently, hardly advanced a step during Boyer's twenty-five years. It had had a feeble enough beginning under Pétion and remained, as it had been, a prerogative of the well-to-do.[58]

Under the complaisant rule of Boyer, accordingly, the people of color came to regard themselves as the unquestioned élite. Their claim was shared, though not always acknowledged, by a small number of blacks (mostly from the North) who had been anciens libres in colonial Saint-Domingue or noblemen under Christophe; who were literate, or whose wealth and ambition attracted attention. Boyer's boast that "all the feelings and prejudices, either of olden times or of national origin, have been superseded by an intense patriotism" was pure buncombe, as he certainly knew.

If only the best brains of the colored group had been content to serve the government, Haiti might have profited from her situation; but lesser government offices were merely springboards for foreign trade in coffee and mahogany, or for the manipulation of business deals. Not "intense patriotism," as Boyer liked to think, but financial gain was the motivating force of the élite, as it had been from colonial times. The man who could amass a modest fortune, so that his children might be educated and their security assured, had done his duty, and he would have been regarded as quixotic to renounce business opportunities for the dubious honor of minor political office. As a consequence of this natural search for gain, the government during Boyer's administration became less and less efficient. Relatives of élite businessmen were given posts because the President could not afford to offend important families. These minor officials then performed their duties awkwardly, or neglected them, in "the unfailing obliquity of dullness."

Skin color became the obsession of high society. Those who had no other merit of which to boast could still revel in their complex-

58. See chap. XVI.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



Granted these obvious difficulties, there is still little to be said for the zeal or integrity of churchmen in Saint-Domingue. Father Cabon cites a report to Rome in 1794, which, he remarks, "was not designed to be made public, and does not bear the earmarks of passion," and which flatly states that "since the expulsion of the Jesuits, the curés have for the most part led lives so indecent . . . that the citizens and Negroes have lost all the sentiments of religion which the Jesuits gave them."[3] There had been distinguished churchmen in Saint-Domingue before 1750, authors, scientists, teachers of some note, but none appeared thereafter. The rich French colony was not a bright star in the Catholic crown.

Undeterred by those who might have been their spiritual guides, the white people followed the easy path of self-indulgence. The universal testimony of visitors is that, with a few notable exceptions, immorality and cruelty were daily commonplaces. To make a fortune was the prime ambition of every white man, since money made possible the luxurious enjoyment of this world's goods. Protest against money-making or soft living would have been futile. Administrative agents turned public office to their own profit; judges sold justice to the highest bidder; planters drove their slaves to death; and priests dispensed religious solace for a tidy sum.

The freedmen, who in everything patterned their lives after social leaders in the white planter class, had no more concern for religion than their models. They attended Mass occasionally as a social event, where they might see and be seen. When in the latter days of the colony discriminatory legislation required that colored persons sit in separate parts of the church, most of the affranchis simply refrained from attending Mass: their religious zeal was not so great as to make them submit to the public shame of segregation. In their daily lives, likewise, they followed the example of the white planters in pursuing pleasure rather than sobriety, "culture" rather than religious zeal. Like the whites, they were often licentious in their conduct. When it came their turn to direct affairs of state in free Haiti, there was little interest in spiritual matters among them. The intellectuals of the group paid homage to the liberal philosophers of the century rather than to religious thinkers.

If religion was at a low ebb in the prosperous days of the colony, it almost disappeared in the excitement of the years following the

3. *Ibid.*, p. 33. revolt of the slaves (1791).

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



674 Soldiers, then, had no great difficulty policing town and country-
369 side, for there was little more crime in the towns than in rural regions. A person arrested would be haled before the nearest juge de
696 paix who would, if necessary, sentence him to jail—which meant
697 sending him to one of the larger towns. This was rather a severe penalty, for the jails were filthy; moreover, only about ten cents a week was ordinarily allotted to each prisoner for food with the result that if a prisoner's family did not supply him, he was likely to be near starvation. Extra work was required for extra fare. Haiti was probably no worse off in respect to its jails than most European and American countries at the time, for this was before the era of prison reform. Inmates of jails were likely to be only petty thieves.

697 During certain régimes the presidents or their generals managed to have numbers of convicts sentenced to hard work, in order to have forced labor on their private estates or projects dear to them. Under any administration there were likely to be a few convicts who performed repair work on streets and roads. It was the usual practice to chain or rope them together by pairs, three yards apart; accompanied by soldiers with loaded muskets, the convicts labored from daylight to sunset, with an hour and a half for a meal at noon. The government pretended to provide for them, but in order to save expense two of the criminals accompanied by two soldiers with fixed bayonets were sent about the neighborhood to beg for the group. The result was that the wretches went ill fed and half naked. They slept in jail on beds which were little more than boards.

701 The final and most persistent branch of government has been the
175 army.[11] Owing to the overmilitarization of Haiti, generals were perennially participating in the civil government—or engaged in overthrowing it. It was to be expected that following the revolution the new independent state formed in 1804 should have a military cast. Dessalines, Christophe, Pétion, Geffrard, Boyer, Cangé, Yayou, Magloire Ambroise, Férou, François, Capoix, Rigaud—these were the great generals and the only important statesmen. It was as if in America not only Washington had been a military leader, but also Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Jay, Hamilton, Madison, Pinckney,

[647] 11. In most governments there has been a body which, although connected with the legislature, had functions pertaining to the law. This was the Chamber of Accounts, a body of five men who examined into and reported to the president upon every branch of expenditure and collection of revenues. It might recommend to him certain financial reforms or improvements, but had no power to enforce its suggestions.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3



175 Boyer carried on Pétion's policy of no taxation. It was not until the American
657 Occupation that Haitians could be said to be taxed. Ninety per cent of the state's
income between 1900 and 1915 regularly came from tariffs, and only ten per cent
[652] from internal taxes. Even the efforts of the Americans, resulting in the laws of 1924
and 1928, were on the whole restricted to a few excise taxes. A land tax was hope-
less, due to the utter confusion of titles and the stubborn impassivity of peasant
squatters.[5]

### 2. *Monetary Policy of Pétion and Boyer*

175 The monetary situation in Haiti was chaotic in its early days. The gold money
652 of France, Spain, England, and the United States circulated, as did small French
coins, and the coins and paper money created by the Haitian rulers, who had com-
plete control over money. For example, Pétion decreed[6] an increase in the value of
the *gourde d'Espagne* from 8 livres 5 sols, to 9 livres; of the French *écu* of 6 francs
from 9 livres to 9 livres 15 sols; and the 5 franc écu from 7 livres 10 sols to 8 livres
5 sols; this almost doubled the value of money in circulation. He also struck small
coins to replace the pieces of 30, 24, 15, 12, and 6 sols of France. His small coins were
merely token money.[7] The paper currency created by Pétion and so easily counter-
feited has been mentioned.

[433] Boyer was continually in financial perplexities. Production was declining while
expenditures had to be radically increased on account of the settlement with
France in 1825. Boyer's budget was not a large one judged by modern standards,
the average expenditure each year being about $5,000,000. To meet this, customs
duties on imports and exports brought in about $2,200,000 annually; territorial
duties on produce, houses, patents or licenses, market fees, and the like, a similar
[316] sum; but some half-million dollars had to be borrowed each year. The government
[425] hoped to get something from developing mines in the Spanish part of the island,
but this hope failed. It was thought also that the sale of government lands might
[454] bring in some revenue, but few people wanted to invest money, when they had it,
in land, with agricultural affairs developing as they were and no way of making
[465] people work: investment in trade was more promising. The national treasury was
so empty that both the civil and military officials were poorly paid. It was fre-
[661] quently said that almost all administrators and persons in authority were open to
bribery. Meantime the number of civil servants was increasing: there was a swarm
[647] of hirelings and subalterns in every commune, like a host of vampires. By their
lack of honesty, conscientiousness, and efficiency, immense sums were lost an-
nually to the treasury.

5. See the *Report of the American High Commissioner* (1929), p. 19.

6. May 4, 1808.

7. *Pétion voyant s'échapper de ses États les gourdes qu'effrayaient ses démêlés avec Christophe, eut pour les retenir l'ingénieuse idée d'y pratiquer une troude. Ce moyen était trop efficace pour ne pas réussir, et il était trop simple pour que l'emploi n'en fut pas généralisé au moins par un équivalent. Ainsi, lorsqu'il en vint à battre monnaie, le chef de l'état du Sud descendit le titre de sa gourde à peu près au titre de la gourde espagnole tarée par son empereur-pièce. Il lui donne 858 millièmes de fin.*" Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, *Saint-Domingue*, II, 194.